

# Appendix: Ten Steps to a Better ESEA

Issue	Recommendation
<p><b>1. College and career readiness.</b> Should states be required to adopt academic standards tied to college and career readiness (such as the Common Core)?</p>	<p>As a condition of receiving federal Title I funds, require states to adopt the Common Core standards in reading and math, OR to demonstrate that their existing standards are just as rigorous as the Common Core. Standards developed apart from the Common Core initiative would be peer reviewed at the federal level by a panel of state officials and content-matter experts; the panel itself (not the secretary of education) would have the authority to determine whether a state's standards are rigorous enough.</p>
<p><b>2. Cut scores.</b> What requirements, if any, should be placed upon states with respect to achievement standards (i.e., "cut scores")?</p>	<p>As a condition of receipt of Title I funds, require states to set achievement standards such that students will be college- and career-ready by the time they graduate from high school. Require states to back-map achievement standards down to at least third grade, so that passing the state assessment in each grade indicates that a student is on track to graduate from twelfth grade ready for college or a career. States that opt out of the state assessment consortia funded by Race to the Top (RTT) would have their standards peer reviewed at the federal level by a panel of state officials and content-matter experts. The panel itself (not the secretary of education) would have the authority to determine whether a state's standards are adequately tied to college and career readiness. No state would be required to adopt achievement standards developed by the Common Core assessment consortia.</p>
<p><b>3. Growth measures.</b> Should states be required to develop assessments that enable measures of individual student growth?</p>	<p>Require states to develop assessments that enable measures of individual student growth as a condition of receipt of Title I funding.</p>
<p><b>4. Science and history.</b> Must states develop standards and assessments in additional subjects beyond English language arts and math?</p>	<p>Require states to develop grade-level science standards; for history (or history/civics/geography), require standards in at least three grade bands. Require annual testing in science and at least one test in history in each of the elementary, middle, and high school levels.</p>

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<p><b>5. School ratings.</b> Should Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) be maintained, tweaked, or scrapped?</p>	<p>Eliminate AYP altogether. Instead, require states (as a condition of Title I funding) to adopt a school rating system (pegged to college and career readiness and, for high schools, graduation rates) that provides transparent information to educators, parents, and taxpayers alike. Require state systems to include the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Annual reporting.</b> States must rate all schools on their effectiveness every year.</li> <li><b>2. Multiple labels.</b> State rating systems cannot be pass/fail, but should indicate a range of effectiveness. States could adopt an A–F rating system, for example.</li> <li><b>3. College and career readiness.</b> The primary benchmark in school ratings should be their effectiveness in preparing all students to be college- and career-ready. High schools should be judged, in part, by how many of their students graduate ready for college or a career (as determined by state assessments). All schools should be judged, at least in part, by how many of their students are on a trajectory to reach college and career readiness by the end of the twelfth grade. States should have the flexibility to determine how to develop these trajectories.</li> <li><b>4. Student growth.</b> Individual student growth must feed into a school’s rating system, though states should have the flexibility to determine the specifics of this requirement. States must have data systems that make this possible.</li> <li><b>5. Tested subjects.</b> States must report separately their schools’ reading, math, science, and history scores.</li> <li><b>6. Disaggregated data.</b> Data must be reported by disaggregated subgroups (racial/ethnic groups, low-income, etc.) as required by current law. In addition to releasing “proficiency rates” by subgroups, states should also release scale scores and percentile rankings for these groups, as well as data on student progress. (This will enable watchdog groups to develop their own school rating and reporting systems and to monitor the state systems.)</li> </ol>

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	<p><b>7. Subgroup performance.</b> State rating systems must incorporate subgroup performance into school ratings. Schools may not receive the highest rating if any of their subgroups is performing poorly.</p> <p><b>8. Participation rates.</b> Schools must continue to report aggregate and disaggregated student participation rates on tests.</p> <p><b>9. Graduation rates.</b> States, districts, and schools must report an adjusted cohort graduation rate, as required by current regulations.</p> <p><b>10. NAEP.</b> Schools must participate in state NAEP exams, as required by current law; they should also be required to participate in science and U.S. history NAEP exams.</p> <p><b>11. Peer review.</b> State systems should be subject to federal peer review to ensure that all requirements are being met.</p> <p><b>12. Penalty.</b> Title I funds may be withheld if a state is determined not to have met transparency requirements.</p>
<p><b>6. Interventions.</b> What requirements, if any, should be placed on states in terms of rewarding and sanctioning schools and turning around the lowest performers?</p>	<p>Instead of prescribing specific remedies and interventions from Washington, rely on transparency to foster rigorous accountability strategies at the state and local levels. Don't mandate any rewards or sanctions or specific interventions in low-performing schools (including public school choice and supplemental educational services). Leave "accountability" to the states and—via transparency—to the public.</p>
<p><b>7. Teacher effectiveness.</b> Should Congress regulate teacher credentials (as with the current Highly Qualified Teachers mandate) and/or require the evaluation of teacher effectiveness?</p>	<p>Eliminate the Highly Qualified Teachers mandate outright. Don't require states to develop new teacher-evaluation systems but do provide competitive grants for states and districts that want federal assistance in doing so.</p>

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<p><b>8. Comparability.</b> Should school districts be required to demonstrate comparability of services between Title I and non–Title I schools, and if so, may they point to a uniform salary schedule in order to do so?</p>	<p>Phase in another transparency requirement whereby districts must annually report school-level budget data, including actual staff and teacher salaries, as well as all nonpersonnel expenditures. Ask the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to develop a common chart of accounts and related standards for reporting these data. At the same time, eliminate the comparability requirement so that districts don't have an incentive to lie about their school-level spending.</p>
<p><b>9. Flexibility.</b> Should the new ESEA provide greater flexibility to states and school districts to deviate from the law's requirements?</p>	<p>Maintain all flexibility options while improving outreach and technical assistance to improve use by states and districts. Permit states to apply for "flexibility contracts" that would enable them to consolidate non–Title I formula funding streams at the state level to use for any purpose under ESEA, and to alter their within-state allocation of Title I funds to increase the proportion of funds going to higher-poverty districts and charter schools. Permit states to retain additional funds (perhaps up to 10 percent) for statewide initiatives that support reform in five key areas: standards and assessments; teacher effectiveness; state data systems; school choice and charters; and low-performing schools. Only states with standards and assessments in place that meet new requirements for ensuring college and career readiness and that have met Title I accountability transparency requirements (described in Issue #5) would be eligible to apply for this flexibility.</p>
<p><b>10. Competitive grants.</b> Should reform-oriented competitive grant programs, including Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation, be authorized in the new ESEA?</p>	<p>Turn Title II into the "reform title" of ESEA and include in it major competitive grant programs, including RTT, i3, charter school initiatives, a competitive version of School Improvement Grants, and an expanded Teacher Incentive Fund, as well as other worthy reform-minded initiatives that may be fostered with federal funds, such as other forms of school choice.</p>